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Summer 2009

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On the Cover

Lt. Col. Harold S. Anderson from the 104th Fighter Wing, Massachusetts Air National Guard, conducts preflight checks in the unit's F-15 aircraft prior to takeoff while participating in a winter training exercise at Key West Naval Air Station, Fla., on March 16, 2009. This training engagement provides an opportunity for the unit's F-15 pilots to train on intercepting dissimilar aircraft flown by the naval unit stationed at Key West. Air National Guard photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert J. Sabonis

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Massachusetts Minuteman
The Nation's First

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Features

First Muster Remembered – Fallen Soldiers Honored at Annual Ceremony in Salem 4

Policing the Streets of Iraq, Military Police Battalion Prepares to Deploy 6

HEAT Coming to Camp Edwards This Year .. 7

Civil Support Team Trains in Battle Ship Cove 8

Northern Exposure: Recruit Sustainment Battalion Trains in Vermont 10

NCO and Soldier of the Year Competitions Hosted by Camp Edwards 13

Training Imperative to Coastal Defense 14

Army Suicide Prevention Program 16

Trainer Simulates Live-Fire Shooting 18

Move! Move! Move! 19

"Barking Dogs" Unleashed On Iraq 21

Old Colony Regional Special Operations Group ... 23

Army Guardsman Receives Coast Guard Commendation 24

Soldiers' Newest GI Bill Exceeds Tuition Assistance, Benefits Dependents 25

History of the Massachusetts National Guard Displayed in Worcester 28

Departments

Command Message 3

Safety Message 7

Short Takes 26

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Command Message

THE FIRST STEP

Command Chief Master Sgt. Richard C. Bedell and I recently had the honor of reviewing the graduation parade of nearly 785 Airmen from Basic Military Training School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

As the new Airmen waited patiently for me to begin, I thought of which significant message to pass along as I reflected on messages that resonated with me as Airman Basic Akey when I stood on this same field more than 33 years ago.

I decided to highlight the three points that I have used throughout my career that best reflect how I approached my professional life.

1) Do your best at whatever position you're in.

2) Don't worry about your next assignment – point number one will take care of point number two.

3) TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EACH AND EVERY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY – technical training, professional, military, academic or vocational. You've earned the right to use it.

Professional military education occurs at all levels, and my belief is that Airmen and Soldiers need to attend PME throughout their military career. My most recent professional development experience was a two-week seminar that focused on National Security Studies with an emphasis on transnational threats to democracy.

More than 100 participants from 53 nations with diverse backgrounds and experiences developed a common understanding of the many challenges to the 21st century security environment.

The point is, professional development opportunities are extended to the Airman Basic as well as the Commanding General. A recent strategic planning event held by senior leadership of the Massachusetts Air National Guard included a day at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., highlighting to senior leaders what professional development opportunities, joint and service specific, are available at their level – leadership by example is my expectation.

The state of Massachusetts has generously given every Airman and Soldier a well-deserved gold mine – the Massachusetts National Guard Education Assistance Program. This program provides a 100 percent tuition and fee waiver for Massachusetts National Guard Soldiers and Airmen attending a state college, university or community college program. Generally, these state-supported programs are offered during the day as part of a degree program. This opportunity will continue as long as you are in good standing academically and until you have reached 130 semester hours. Combine this with the Montgomery GI Bill, the educational kicker, a weekend drill check, and one could graduate virtually debt free after an excellent academic or training program from a top-notch Massachusetts institution.

Maj. Gen. Michael D. Akey
Commander, Massachusetts Air National Guard

Your path to success is self improvement through education. There may be many reasons why you feel you're not able to take advantage of this opportunity. My advice is not to procrastinate! The longer you delay, the more reasons not to take action will surface – "I'm too busy, I have young children, I can't afford it, It's been too long since I left high school, I'm not a good student, I'm too old to go back." Sometimes, it's hard to take that first step, but as a popular Chinese proverb states – "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." ✯

Spc. Brian Tran, B Troop, 1st Squadron, 182nd Cavalry Regiment, meets with Veterans Agent Stephen Roy, Bunker Hill Community College, at a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program event at the Sheraton Colonial Boston North & Conference Center in Wakefield, Mass., April 4, 2009.

The Yellow Ribbon Program provides information, services, referral and proactive outreach programs to Soldiers and their families through all phases of the deployment cycle. The goal of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is to prepare Soldiers and families for mobilization, sustain families during mobilization, and reintegrate Soldiers with their families, communities and employers upon redeployment or release from active duty. The program includes information on current benefits and resources available to help overcome the challenges of returning home after deployment.

Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Carter, the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, performs an inspection of troops mustered on Salem Common as part of the April 4 ceremony commemorating the 372nd anniversary of the First Muster on Salem Common. Despite the day's blustery conditions, Carter purposefully strode among the Soldiers in formation with Salem City Council President Paul C. Prevey.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Alfred Tripolone III

Top: Re-enactors of the East Regiment, depicting the purpose for the occasion, salute the official party while in full period regalia during the Pass in Review of troops as part of the April 4 ceremony commemorating the 372nd anniversary of the First Muster on Salem Common. U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Alfred Tripolone III

First Muster Remembered

Fallen Soldiers Honored at Annual Ceremony in Salem

By Pfc. Michael V. Broughey, 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

SALEM, Mass. – Soldiers of the Massachusetts Army National Guard, along with several veterans organizations and living history groups, gathered April 4, 2009, for the annual Salem Muster to commemorate the first formation of the American militia.

Three hundred and seventy-two years ago, members of the East Regiment, the ancestors of the modern Massachusetts Army National Guard, set a precedent in the New World by assembling on Salem Common in 1637. This event is celebrated annually by the Massachusetts Army National Guard and the city of Salem.

The day of remembrance began with a wreath-laying ceremony at St. Peter's Church in Salem at the gravesite of Capt. Stephen Abbott. In 1785, Abbott founded the 2nd Corps of Cadets and served as its first commander. The lineage of the 2nd Corps is now proudly carried by Battery A, 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment of the Massachusetts National Guard.

Following the wreath laying at the church, the commemoration relocated to Armory Park on Essex Street to honor the sacrifices made by Citizen-Soldiers during the American Revolution, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"This event allows us the opportunity to remember those Citizen-Soldiers whose sacrifices enabled the creation of our nation," said Jay Finney, head of marketing for the Peabody Essex Museum, in his opening speech.

Maj. James Hally, commander of the 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, addressed his unit, military re-enactors from all periods of our nation's history, and a crowd of Salem residents on an overcast Saturday morning and then laid a wreath in remembrance of the Soldiers of the Essex Regiment who died at the battle of Lexington and Concord during the Revolutionary War.

The 101st Field Artillery Regiment, the modern descendant of one of our nation's first regiments, is scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in early 2010.

"I take great comfort in knowing that if I fall, or if one of my Soldiers falls during our tour of duty, our names will be remembered; our service will be honored and our sacrifice will never, ever be forgotten," said Hally

Hally's address was followed by a rifle salute in commemoration of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in combat from generations both past and present.

The ceremony continued with the 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment; the 101st Engineer Battalion; the 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment; and the 1st Squadron, 182nd Cavalry Regiment, of the Massachusetts Army National Guard, forming up on Salem Common. The Guard members were joined by military re-enactors from several periods in history, from the first regiment in 1636 to the Second World War.

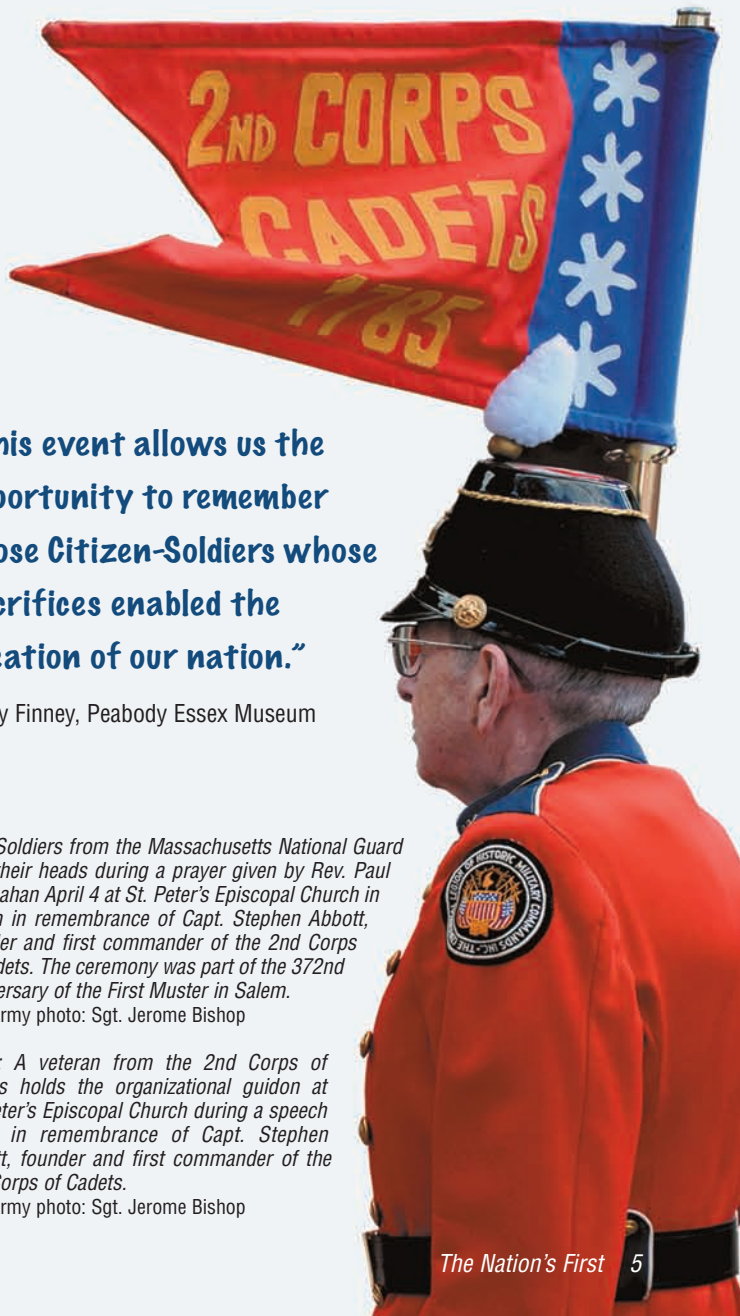
The 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, also provided a 13-gun salute to honor past and present troops.

Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Carter, the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, performed the ceremonial inspection of the troops, circling the entire formation on the field before returning to the podium. Several guest speakers, including government and city officials and military commanders, spoke to all in attendance.

The ceremony and day's events concluded with the Pass in Review, during which each unit took its turn marching for the commander.

Prior to ending the 372nd anniversary of the First Muster, Carter addressed the formation, "When you enter the theater in either Iraq or Afghanistan, you take with you nearly 400 years of honor, courage and sacrifice." ✯

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, provide a 13-gun salute to honor past and present troops. The April 4 ceremony was part of the 372nd anniversary of the First Muster in Salem. U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Michael V. Broughey



"This event allows us the opportunity to remember those Citizen-Soldiers whose sacrifices enabled the creation of our nation."

– Jay Finney, Peabody Essex Museum

Left: Soldiers from the Massachusetts National Guard bow their heads during a prayer given by Rev. Paul Bresnahan April 4 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Salem in remembrance of Capt. Stephen Abbott, founder and first commander of the 2nd Corps of Cadets. The ceremony was part of the 372nd anniversary of the First Muster in Salem.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. Jerome Bishop

Right: A veteran from the 2nd Corps of Cadets holds the organizational guidon at St. Peter's Episcopal Church during a speech given in remembrance of Capt. Stephen Abbott, founder and first commander of the 2nd Corps of Cadets.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. Jerome Bishop

POLICING THE STREETS OF IRAQ

Military Police Battalion Prepares to Deploy

By Army Sgt. James Lally
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

MILFORD, Mass. – Military police units trained for their upcoming deployment to Iraq with state-of-the-art equipment at Camp Edwards, Mass., March 19, 2009.

The 211th Military Police Battalion kicked off their annual training by practicing to enter and clear a suspected enemy stronghold at Camp Edwards' new "shoot house."

The "shoot house" is equipped with a state-of-the-art video surveillance system to allow trainers to sit with commanders and provide a real-time and accurate assessment of a team's skills.

The facilities at Camp Edwards are designed to provide a sense of realism so Soldiers can hone their warrior skills, build team cohesion, and make mistakes in a safe environment before they ever have to deploy to a combat zone.

Sgt. Michael J. Geary, team leader, 747th Military Police Company, said, "Having access to these facilities gives us the chance to teach younger Soldiers essential warrior skills during annual training so that when we go to our mobilization station we can spend more time refining those skills instead of teaching them."

Geary has been deployed to Iraq twice as a military policeman, once to Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit and once to Iraq's capital city, Baghdad. The experience has left him familiar with what it takes to train for war.

A Soldier from the 211th Military Police Battalion rushes to clear a building during a patrol exercise at Camp Edwards, Mass., March 19, 2009. The battalion is preparing for a deployment to Iraq later this year.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

"By training here we have more time to learn each other's strengths and weaknesses in a safe, constructive environment," said Geary.

After practicing small team tactics at the "shoot house," Soldiers moved on to conducting larger scaled combat patrols in a simulated Iraqi town at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations on Urban Terrain Training Site.

Soldiers from the 211th Military Police Battalion rush to clear a building during a patrol exercise at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations on Urban Terrain site, Camp Edwards, Mass., March 19, 2009.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

While patrolling, Soldiers came under attack from other Soldiers playing the role of Iraqi civilians and insurgents. The civilians and insurgents were Soldiers who have experience patrolling Iraqi streets as military policemen. The role-players pushed their comrades hard to create an intense situation so they could learn hard lessons here, rather than in Iraq.

The insurgents ambushed the Soldiers using a type of paint ball training ammunition to shoot them. The Soldiers returned fire at the insurgents, who feigned injury only after they were hit by the training rounds.

After finishing a patrolling exercise at the MOUT Site, Spc. Mark A. Dotson, a vehicle driver with the Headquarters Detachment, 211th Military Police Battalion, said, "I was anxious when I saw all of the people. They were on the roofs and walking all around us. It was intense."

MP units also used a tactical training base that simulates a forward operating base in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo with guard towers, razor wire and an entry control point where Soldiers practiced base security procedures.

To round out their training, the Soldiers received combat medical instruction, convoy operations, cultural awareness and Arabic language training. ✭

SAFETY MESSAGE

Heart Attach Victim Aided by Guardsman

By Army Sgt. James Lally, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Army Spc. Alex Santos, from the 182nd Medical Company, Massachusetts Army National Guard, was awarded the Massachusetts Humanitarian Medal for aiding a heart attack victim on a railway platform at North Station in Boston, Feb. 27, 2009.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. Christina F. Nicholson

MILFORD, Mass. – Pain grips your chest, you stumble and begin to fall. Desperate, you try to call for help, but all you can do is gasp for air. You know you need help, but you are powerless to do anything – lucky for you there's an Army medic standing so close that he catches you before you can hit the floor.

While waiting for a train Feb. 27, Army Spc. Alex Santos from the 182nd Medical Company, Massachusetts Army National Guard, noticed that a man was having a heart attack and began providing immediate care during the first critical moments of cardiac arrest on the railway platform at North Station in Boston.

Santos said, "I was waiting for a train after having dinner with my cousin when suddenly I heard a gasp coming from behind me. I turned to look and saw an older man having a seizure. The man began turning blue, and I assisted him to the ground."

Candace Kruszinski and Patty Rogers, nurses who were also waiting for a train, also came to the patient's aid, and they all worked together to help him. Santos began giving the man chest compressions while one of the nurses used on automated external defibrillator to re-establish a normal heart rhythm while the patient was still in cardiac arrest.

Someone else contacted emergency medical service technicians while the impromptu team performed CPR and used the AED.

"His airway was obstructed by his tongue, so I asked my cousin to get a spoon from McDonald's, and Nurse Candace Kruszinki used it to shift his tongue out of the way so she could provide breaths," said Santos. "It was great to see that you can work with anyone as long as the protocols are the same. It was smooth work all around."

Minutes later, EMTs arrived at the train station and transported the patient to the hospital where he received definitive care.

"I found out later that he was listed as being in a stable condition. It was great to hear that the gentleman was stable. It's good to give him a chance to head home," said Santos.

Santos joined the Massachusetts Army National Guard to find a sense of direction, and he wanted to work in the medical field to help people.

"For most Soldiers, medics are it for medical care during their most critical moments. I wanted to help and see results immediately," said Santos.

Santos works full time as an emergency room technician at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and is fulfilling the prerequisites for physician's assistant school.

Medical emergencies can cause anxiety for most people because the stakes are high; fortunately, medical professionals focus on the task at hand and bring order to chaos.

"I wasn't nervous when I realized what was happening. I acted on pure instinct and let the training kick in. I deal with similar situations at work on occasion," said Santos.

Like many other first responders, Santos is modest about his role in saving the man's life, but to a helpless person who is struggling to hold on to life, a first responder is a hero.

Spc. Santos has since been awarded the Massachusetts Humanitarian Medal for his compassionate and selfless actions. ✯

HEAT Coming to Camp Edwards This Year

The High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle Egress Assistance Trainer is a training device designed to meet the Army specific training needs of Soldiers, institutions and the operational environment. It is needed to support the commander's requirements for initial sustainment training and leader development capabilities. Camp Edwards will receive one of these trainers during this year.

Hands-on training in a replicated tactical vehicle (HMMWV or Humvee) affords commanders the capability of immersing Soldiers in a replicated operational environment without risking the safety of Soldiers, damaging expensive equipment or potentially polluting/destroying the environment. The HEAT training device also allows Soldiers to perform in the correct geo-spatial environment crew drills that would be too dangerous in a live environment.

The purpose of the HEAT is to train Soldiers and all Department of Defense personnel on the effects of rollover and to conduct drills that will provide the skill and ability to react properly during a rollover and/or emergency exit situation. Soldiers should receive proper preparation and training to survive an inverted event.

The HEAT, linked with substantive training, may reduce/prevent rollover injuries and fatalities. The device will reinforce the importance of seat positioning, wearing seatbelts, demonstrating the feeling of being disoriented, and the actual effort that is required to execute rollover and emergency procedures for getting out. The trainer will allow individuals and crews to rehearse and physically execute the necessary steps required to survive a vehicle rollover.

Conducting the training under controlled conditions will allow vehicle occupants to gain experience in the proper egress procedures. This training is necessary for Soldiers to achieve self-control and overcome the natural fear and panic following the catastrophe which led to the vehicle rollover. ✯

Civil Support Team Trains in Battle Ship Cove

By Army Sgt. James Lally, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

FALL RIVER, Mass. – A Weapons of Mass Destruction team swept a former Soviet naval ship for radioactive material March 4 at the Battle Ship Cove naval ship display in Fall River, Mass.

The 1st Civil Support Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard, used the ship to conduct a radioactive material training exercise.

Prior to the exercise, the CST conducted a two-day course about rapid radiological assessments. The purpose of the exercise was to train the team through all stages of an alert with an emphasis on dealing with a radiation hazard and to build upon their previous maritime operations training.

The training mission covered tasks such as establishing a base of operations, maintaining an operations center, installing communications and conducting a hazardous material survey with a focus on radiological material.

"The team is using detection equipment that will be carried and employed on the ship," said Maj. Jason M. Squitier, science officer, 1st Civil Support Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard. "Additional stationary force protection equipment may be utilized, depending upon how the team reacts to the training scenario."

The training scenario used was that Battleship Cove just received a vessel donated from the Russian Navy. Once the vessel is docked at the park, the local fire department is asked to perform a sweep of the ship's decks for any chemical and radiological hazards that may have been present from past operations. During the sweep no chemical hazards were discovered, but the alarm on one firefighter's radiation pager went off. The firefighters then disembarked the ship and requested the assistance of the 1st CST to further characterize and identify the hazard.

"In a situation like this, we would go to the site and survey the area to determine where and what the hazard might be and bring it to the lab," said Sgt. Robyn M. Corbin, Nuclear, Biological and Chemical team member, 1st Civil Support Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard.

"Once the survey phase of the operation begins, we are timed, and we need to get to the area and begin radiation testing. All of our equipment is loaded on the trucks, and

Nuclear, Biological and Chemical team members from the 1st Civil Support Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard, survey a former Soviet naval ship for radioactive material during a training exercise March 4, 2009, at the Battle Ship Cove naval ship display in Fall River, Mass. U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

the batteries that we need get recharged while we are moving to the scene," said Corbin.

Capt. Anthony G. Circosta, survey team leader, 1st Civil Support Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard, briefed the team on what to do if they found anyone in need of medical assistance. "The local fire department went aboard the ship, and one of their radiation detectors went off, so they left. Since then, the ship's generator mechanic has not been accounted for. If the survey team finds him or anyone else, they call the decontamination team to remove him and keep surveying the area," said Circosta.

"The mechanic was represented by a 185-pound mannequin that the decontamination team had to remove from the ship," said Lt. Col. Margaret White, commander, 1st Civil Support Team.

"It's a difficult thing to do while wearing a chemical protective suit and breathing through a gas mask. Maintaining physical fitness enables Soldiers to perform this kind of challenging mission," said White.

To prevent injuries, the team's physician assistant monitors their blood pressure, temperature, pulse and heart rate regularly. "It gives us an idea what their normal ranges are so that if they

have an abnormal reading during a mission, we can substitute [for] them another team member," said White.

The chemical protective equipment the team wears provides an appropriate level of protection for a radiological mission, but allows them to move in the confined space on board a ship. The team works in small groups with the U.S. Coast Guard and has increased their maritime operations over the last year.

"It's a difficult environment to work in. To get a feel for it, the team is going to sleep on board the ship tonight. Individual participation strengthens the unit's radiation response skills and refines our maritime operations activities," said White.

The ship that the team trained and slept on is named the Hiddensee. It was originally commissioned in 1985 by the East German People's Navy as the Rudolf Eglehofer. The Hiddensee is a Tarantul I class corvette, built at the Petrovsky Shipyard located near the Soviet city of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). It was designed to oppose any naval threat to the East German Coast. To fulfill that mission, it carried long-range anti-ship missiles and an array of defensive weapons designed to ensure its own survival.

Following the reunification of Germany, the Hiddensee served with the Federal German Navy until her decommissioning in April 1991.

The Hiddensee joined the Battleship Cove fleet June 14, 1997. ✯

Information from the Battle Ship Cove Naval Ship Display Web Site was used in this story.

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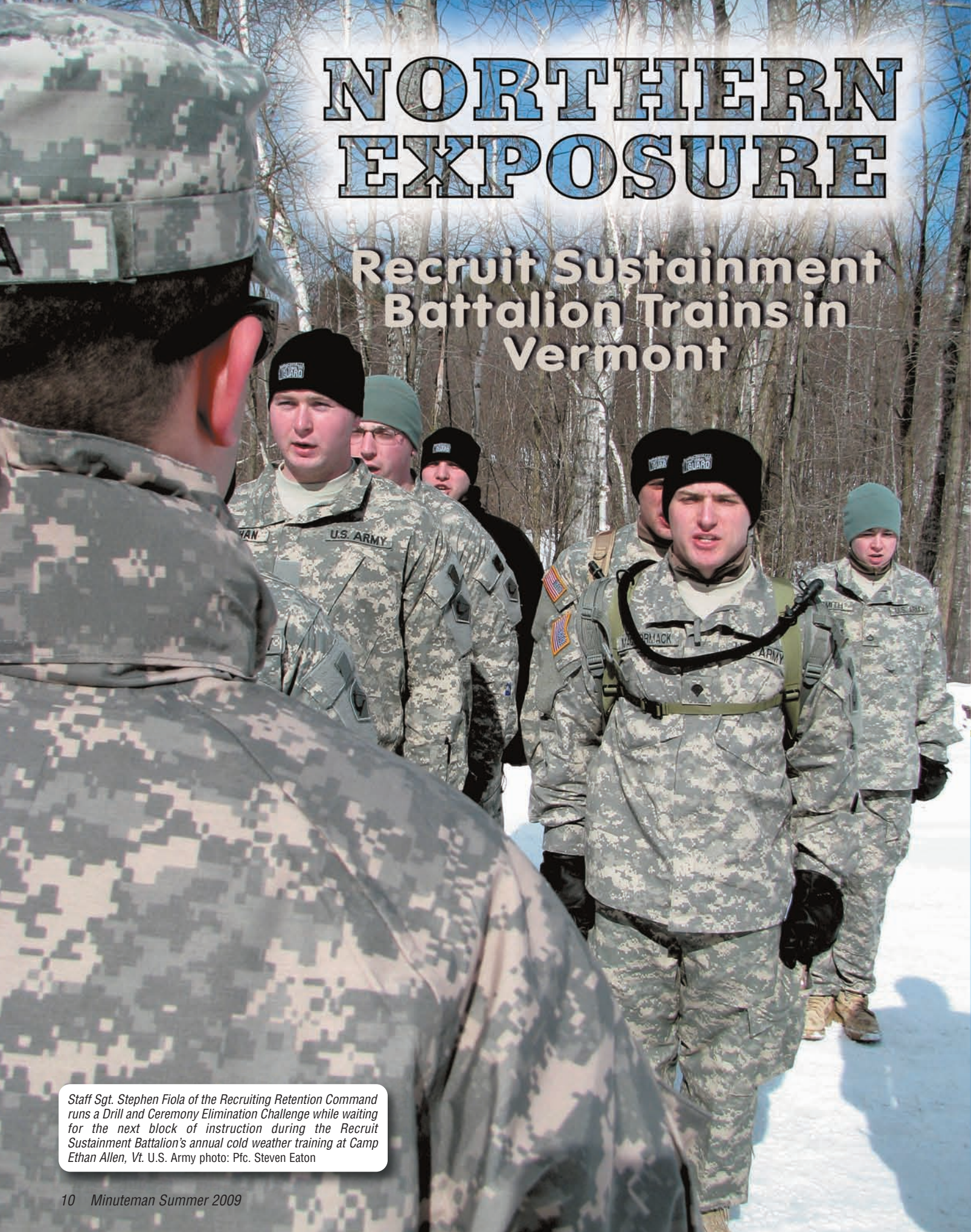
NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Recruit Sustainment Battalion Trains in Vermont



Staff Sgt. Stephen Fiola of the Recruiting Retention Command runs a Drill and Ceremony Elimination Challenge while waiting for the next block of instruction during the Recruit Sustainment Battalion's annual cold weather training at Camp Ethan Allen, Vt. U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Steven Eaton

By Army Pfc. Steven Eaton
65th Public Affairs Operation Center

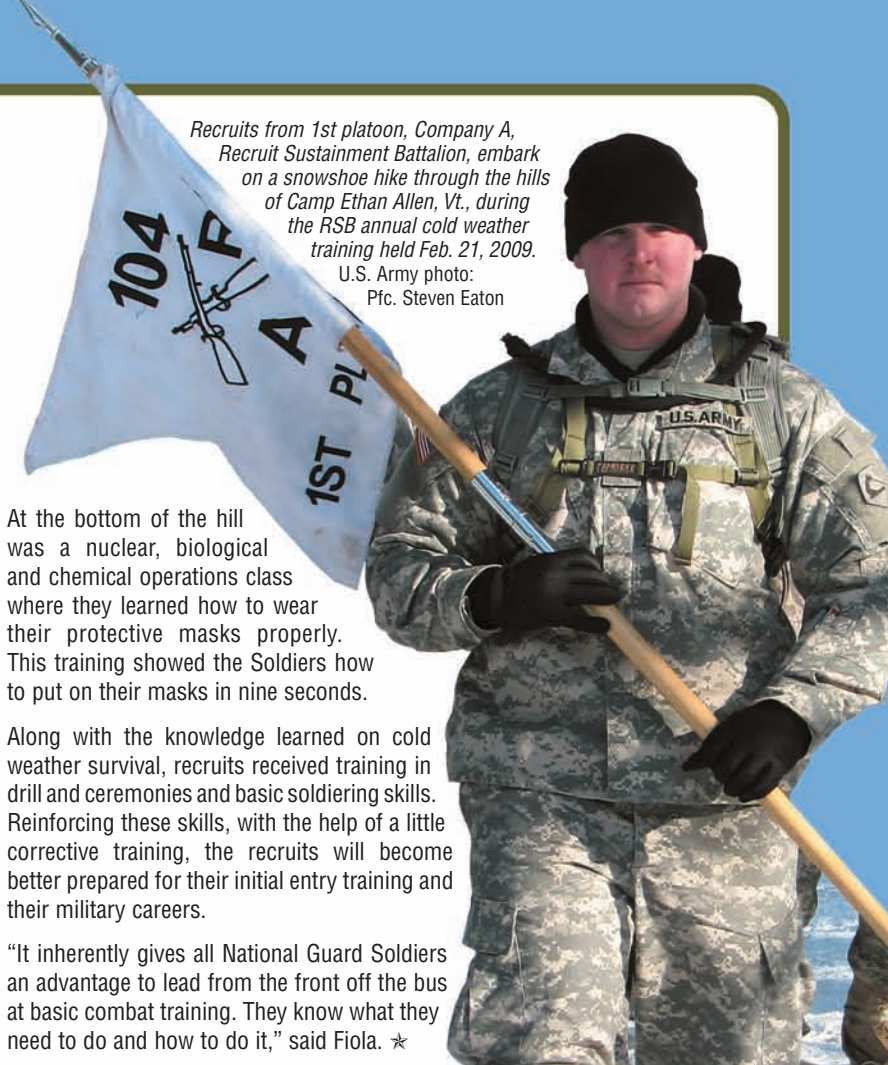
CAMP ETHAN ALLEN, Vt. – As the sun shone in the bright, blue sky, Soldiers from the Massachusetts Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Battalion trekked up and down hills and through deep snow as part of the battalion's annual cold weather training held here, Feb. 21.

During the three-day training session in the cold air of Vermont, recruits were challenged in a variety of training areas. First was a mile-long snowshoe march through the hills where recruits learned to properly wear and walk with snowshoes.

Next was the Engagement Skills Trainer where the Soldiers got comfortable with the M-16A2, the standard weapon issued during basic training. At the EST, they learned the essential skills of basic rifle marksmanship such as controlling breathing, acquiring the same sight picture and trigger squeeze. The recruits shot a mock M-16 at a screen that registered the shots so the instructor could tell them where improvement was needed.

Once finished with the EST, the recruits headed uphill on snowshoes until they reached the cold weather survival training site. Here they were instructed on the basic essentials a Soldier should carry when conducting cold weather missions. On top of the hill, they learned to construct a shelter and remain warm even on the coldest of days.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about cold weather survival techniques. Doing it in the mountains of Vermont gives the warriors a bit more of an adventure being away from what they are used to," said Staff Sgt. Stephen Fiola, platoon sergeant of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company.



Recruits from 1st platoon, Company A, Recruit Sustainment Battalion, embark on a snowshoe hike through the hills of Camp Ethan Allen, Vt., during the RSB annual cold weather training held Feb. 21, 2009.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Steven Eaton

At the bottom of the hill was a nuclear, biological and chemical operations class where they learned how to wear their protective masks properly. This training showed the Soldiers how to put on their masks in nine seconds.

Along with the knowledge learned on cold weather survival, recruits received training in drill and ceremonies and basic soldiering skills. Reinforcing these skills, with the help of a little corrective training, the recruits will become better prepared for their initial entry training and their military careers.

"It inherently gives all National Guard Soldiers an advantage to lead from the front off the bus at basic combat training. They know what they need to do and how to do it," said Fiola. ✯

During a break from training, recruits in 1st and 2nd platoons of the Recruit Sustainment Battalion are fed soup and hot chocolate during the battalion's annual winter training at Camp Ethan Allen, Vt., Feb. 21, 2009.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Steven Eaton

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NCO and Soldier of the Year Competitions Hosted by Camp Edwards

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Steve Tedeschi and
Army Sgt. James Lally, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

MILFORD, Mass. – The Massachusetts Army National Guard held Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year competitions at Camp Edwards, Mass., March 6-8, 2009. Eight Noncommissioned Officers competed against each other in the 2009 Massachusetts Army National Guard's NCO of the Year competition, with three enlisted Soldiers competing to become the 2009 Massachusetts Army National Guard Soldier of the Year.

All the Soldiers had to successfully appear before a panel of senior Noncommissioned Officers at their unit, battalion and brigade-level commands in order to be chosen to compete in the statewide competition.

Spc. Tyson N. Klay, Company A, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard, won the 2009 Soldier of the Year competition representing the 51st Troop Command. Tyson said, "The command felt I was a good candidate so I took it upon myself to come and compete against other Soldiers. I am happy they had the confidence in me, and I'm proud to be representing the Massachusetts National Guard."

The competition was designed to test the Soldiers' endurance, intellect and judgment by evaluating their performance while performing Army warrior tasks.

Massachusetts State Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. David Costa, said, "I'm pleased with the caliber of Soldiers competing. The competitors' packets show they all have education past the high school level, attended numerous service schools, their physical fitness and their motivation are exceptional. I'm very pleased with the unit support this program has received from sponsorship to mentorship."

The weekend's first outdoor event was the M16 rifle qualification. The unseasonably warm weather, coupled with melting snow, provided the Soldiers with an opportunity to fire an M16 rifle while lying in a slush puddle, testing not only their marksmanship but also their discipline.

2009 Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Sgt. Christopher Olsen, left, of Company C, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, and 2009 Soldier of the Year Spc. Tyson Klay, right, of Company A, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment pose with their Massachusetts Bow Awards presented to them for excellence at Camp Edwards, Mass., March 8, 2009. The Soldiers participated in a three-day competition that began with a test of their marksmanship skills and ended with a 9.5-mile road march to test their endurance. Both Soldiers represented the 51st Troop Command in the competition.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. 1st Class Steve Tedeschi

The national competitions have changed from just a board process to a hands-on physical and mental challenge. To be sure Soldiers from Massachusetts were prepared for the regional and national competitions, Massachusetts altered the competition to mirror the national requirements.

"This is one of the most competitive competitions in Massachusetts. The candidates are required to complete a 9.5-mile ruck march, perform six hands-on tasks, excel in weapons qualification and stand before a board, all while being observed! Massachusetts is mirroring the national and regional model, and it is very mentally and physically challenging," said Costa.

Sgt. Christopher W. Olsen, Company C, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard, also representing the 51st Troop Command, won the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition. "This was more comprehensive mentally and physically, more challenging than just preparing for a board. The basic Soldier skills aren't things you can just read up on. The events were real challenging, the competition was top notch, and the instructors were highly qualified," said Olsen.

"Hopefully the competition will grow next year. People are really encouraging leaders and Soldiers to take part in it; it was a really good experience. I would definitely mentor someone next year – that's part of being a good Noncommissioned Officer," said Olsen.

The winners of the competition will represent the Massachusetts Army National Guard at the regional competition in New York in May 2009. ✯

TRAINING Imperative to COASTAL DEFENSE

By Capt. Matthew T. Mutti, 104th Fighter Wing Executive Staff Officer

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – After the 104th Fighter Wing was directed to convert from A-10 aircraft to F-15 aircraft in 2005, a series of changes began to unfold: changes in the base infrastructure, manning, and now the way it trains. On March 7, 2009, the wing participated in its first F-15 deployment exercise. To engage in dissimilar aircraft intercept training, 160 members and seven F-15s traveled to Naval Air Station Key West, Fla.

While flying the A-10, the unit regularly deployed to engage in combat search and rescue and close air support training along with U.S. Army and Army National Guard units. This time it was different on many levels, the most evident being air-to-air combat training, a skill set that the pilots of the 104th Fighter Wing gladly accept an opportunity to practice.

With snow still on the ground in New England, the wing packed up and transported the flying operation to Naval Air Station Key West. This undertaking marks a historic first step for the wing to become operational in its new mission, slated for January of 2010, as they resume responsibility for providing air sovereignty alert from Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield. With Exercise Red Flag a few months away, this opportunity allowed Airmen from throughout the base the chance to spread their wings and practice what they will be graded on in Nevada during Red Flag.

With seven aircraft on the ground at Key West, the first step was completed – to get there. Two days later the exercises began, with a pace of four aircraft launching at a time, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The 131st Fighter Squadron, attached to the 104th Fighter Wing, flew against both Canadian CF-18 Super Hornets and U.S. Navy F-18 Hornets in both Red-Air and Blue-Air engagements. While engaging in Red-Air, the pilots flew in the role of aggressors, mimicking the behaviors and tactics of potential adversaries. While in Blue-Air scenarios, the aviators practiced both offensive and defensive counter-air tactics.

Maj. Mark Malouin, a 131st Fighter Squadron pilot assigned to the Massachusetts Air National Guard, prepares Maj. Gen. Joseph Carter, the Massachusetts National Guard Adjutant General, for flight in an F-15 D model while at Naval Air Station Key West, on March 17, 2009. U.S. Air Force photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert J. Sabonis

"The value of working in these conditions is nearly unmatched," said Capt. Daniel Wittmer, 131st Fighter Squadron weapons officer. "Within minutes we were able to engage multiple targets in the local airspace, allowing ample time to run multiple scenarios and capitalize on every training opportunity."

Maintenance and support functions played a key role to making this training opportunity a reality. Throughout the two-week-long engagement, the aircraft maintenance members generated 43 sorties when only 41 were originally scheduled. They maintained an 80 percent mission-capable rate with a 30-year-old airframe.

"This type of training is critical to our success in providing air sovereignty to the Northeast, specifically when we could be engaged with different types of aircraft crossing into our airspace," said Col. Robert T. Brooks Jr., 104th Fighter Wing commander. "The wing demonstrated that it was still proficient in its expeditionary foundations. Generating seven jets for deployment all while making sure all the support functions were properly equipped and trained is no simple feat."

While conducting this training in Key West, the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Carter, and the Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Brig. Gen. L. Scott Rice, traveled down to view the operation first hand. While at Key West, the Massachusetts National Guard leadership addressed the Airmen who participated in the exercise.

"The Massachusetts National Guard has met its objectives, you (the deployed Airmen) made it happen, and without question this training opportunity was a complete success at every level," said Carter.

While at Naval Air Station Key West, Carter took advantage of the opportunity to fly with the 131st Fighter Squadron, learning first hand the stressors supersonic flight puts on the body and the importance of the training. Traveling at speeds in excess of 760 miles per hour, Carter is now part of a small society of Massachusetts National Guard members who have broken the sound barrier. ✯

Technical Sgt. Thomas R. Hill, from the 104th Fighter Wing, Massachusetts Air National Guard, replaces flares on the unit's F-15 aircraft while participating in a winter training exercise at Key West Naval Air Station, Fla., March 16, 2009.
U.S. Air Force photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert J. Sabonis

Staff Sgt. Thomas Pavelchak inspects the vertical stabilizer of a 104th Fighter Wing F-15 during a training exercise at Naval Air Station Key West, Fla.
U.S. Air Force photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert J. Sabonis

Senior Airman Joshua A. Read and Major Mark J. Malouin from the 104th Fighter Wing, Massachusetts Air National Guard, walk out to the F-15 model for an incentive flight at the key West Naval Air Station, Fla., March 16, 2009.
U.S. Air Force photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert J. Sabonis

Army Suicide Prevention Program

By Army Sgt. James Lally, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

MILFORD, Mass. – The Massachusetts National Guard kicked off another round of an aggressive suicide prevention campaign March 17, 2009.

The strategy of the U.S. Army's Suicide Prevention Program includes efforts to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health care, improve access to behavioral health providers and raise the awareness of junior leaders while instilling intervention skills.

An Army-wide "stand down" from normal training was ordered for a month so that commands and individual units could take part in training sessions on how to recognize and try to prevent suicides after the Army reported an all-time high of 143 Soldiers who committed suicide in 2008.

The Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Carter, supported the "stand down" so that the leaders of every Massachusetts Army National Guard unit could make teaching this aggressive suicide-prevention campaign their top priority.

"The reason I directed a "stand down" was to ensure that leaders would have the time they need to implement this important program that will enable our Soldiers, civilians and family members to take care of each other. The people who comprise our total force are our greatest resource; therefore, we need to ensure that they have every available tool to take care of themselves," said Carter.

The Massachusetts Army National Guard will complete the training in three phases. During the first phase, trainers instruct senior leaders on how to implement the program using the Army's train-the-trainer approach. In turn, they will teach the program to subordinate leaders and will be responsible for ensuring every Massachusetts Army National Guard Soldier participates.

The second phase incorporates a broader training session for Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians and family members. In this phase, leaders and family members will learn to be aware of risk factors, suicidal behavior warning signs, and how to intervene on a Soldier's behalf.

"It is important to include Army civilians into this training because they work with Soldiers before and after they have deployed; therefore, they may be able to recognize changes in their behavior," said Maj. Dana P. Sanders-Udo, commander of Headquarters Detachment, Joint Force Headquarters, Massachusetts Army National Guard.

The third phase, which will run concurrently with phases one and two, will establish an annual suicide prevention training requirement as well as a deployment support cycle.

The training is intended to be delivered to most Soldiers by their squad leaders, the noncommissioned officers who provide direct leadership to Soldiers whether they are learning first aid during a drill weekend or on a combat patrol overseas.

The program highlights the roles and responsibilities of first-line leaders and peers to identify and intervene on behalf of Soldiers who may be at risk. This training is dependent on the personal connections that exist between Soldiers, and also between Soldiers and their families. These relationships are important because no one can gauge a Soldier's emotional state better than their spouse, best friend or "battle buddy."

Many family members will receive the training from members of the Massachusetts National Guard's Family Program Office. The Family Program staff establishes ongoing communication, involvement and support between the National Guard and Guard Families during times of deployment and nondeployment.

The program of instruction is packaged in an interactive DVD, titled "Beyond the Front," produced by Lincoln University and the U.S. Army Research Laboratory. The DVD shows the trainees emotional scenarios performed by actors. After each scene, the facilitator presents the trainees with a few options to choose from. Each choice has consequences and the trainees learn which methods of intervention are the most productive.

Master Sgt. James Owens watches a scene play out from the U.S. Army's new interactive suicide prevention training program, while attending a training session at Joint Force Headquarters – Massachusetts, March 4, 2009. During the month of March, the Army conducted a "stand-down" from normal training to ensure that all Soldiers received suicide prevention training. U.S. Army photo: Staff Sgt. Don Veitch

Master Sgt. Stephen Kelsch, acting first sergeant of Headquarters Detachment, Joint Force Headquarters, Massachusetts Army National Guard, has facilitated the training for not only his unit but also many Guardsmen who work full time for the National Guard.

"During the training a few Soldiers had reactions to it, and we referred them to behavioral health care. If this training can save even one life, it is worth it," said Kelsch.

To ensure that this training reaches more than 6,000 Massachusetts Guardsmen, plus many of their family members, in a relatively short period of time is challenging. To make it all happen, commanders will use video teleconferencing to permit some Soldiers to participate remotely from several armories across the state.

Joe Montiverdi, the distance learning manager at the Massachusetts National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters said, "This medium is the best way to train a lot of people at one time. We have seven distance learning classrooms across the state. They are normally used for training Soldiers using online training resources."

The training is scheduled to be completed by all Massachusetts Army National Guard Soldiers by July 15, 2009. ✯

Lt. Col. Richard F. Johnson and Command Sgt. Maj. Brian P. Branley from the 211th Military Police Battalion, listen as Maj. Brett P. Conaway reads Branley's promotion order at the Massachusetts National Guard Headquarters in Milford, Mass., April 3. U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

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1st Lt. Adam Peterson, a platoon leader for the 181st Engineer Battalion, takes a turn practicing his marksmanship at the Engagement Skills Trainer at Camp Curtis Guild March 21.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Alfred Tripolone III,
65th Public Affairs Operations Center

Trainer Simulates Live-Fire Shooting

By Pfc. Michael V. Broughey, 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

CAMP CURTIS GUILD, Mass. – The still air and soft light before him gives the Soldier a sense of comfort as he smoothly locks the magazine into his weapon and pulls back the charging handle, loading the first round into the chamber. In just a brief moment the soldier takes a breath and settles his cheek against the stock of the weapon; while looking down range through the sights, he is ready to engage the target.

Luckily for Spc. Tim Houldcroft of Abington, Mass., and his fellow Soldiers from the 181st Engineer Battalion, the target is only part of a routine qualification at the range in Camp Curtis Guild. However, this is no ordinary range, it's called the Engagement Skills Trainer, and it allows Soldiers like Houldcroft to stay sharp on their marksmanship without having to fire a single round.

This special kind of simulation needs to feel like the real thing in order to be effective, otherwise it would just be another video game. Equipped with real M-16 rifles modified with laser targeting equipment, this is more than just a game – it's familiarization with a Soldier's trusted weapon and preparation for combat.

Even though Houldcroft isn't using a single round of ammunition, he still feels the recoil of the shot he fires. The rifles are also modified with a pneumatic compressed air pump to simulate the effect of firing a weapon. The images on the screen in front of the Soldier are scaled to real life as well. The targets fired upon during the EST are just as big, or small, as they would be at any live-fire range.

The EST provides three distinct modes. First, the marksmanship setting allows Soldiers to group, zero, and qualify on a virtual 40-target range. Second, collective scenarios put the Soldiers in a combat setting as if they were with a squad on the streets of Iraq testing their reaction time and accuracy under pressure. Finally, for Military Police Soldiers, the shoot-don't-shoot scenario tests their ability to identify the innocent from the enemy.

"The Soldiers really enjoy the collective scenarios," said Spc. Danielle Kelly of Wakefield, part of the Operations and Facility Maintenance team at Camp Curtis Guild. Through her computer terminal, Kelly can replay the action in slow-motion, allowing Soldiers to see where their shots landed, and who successfully hit the most targets. Based on the Soldiers' performance, the intensity of the battle can be increased to further challenge them.

After visiting the EST, Soldiers are far more likely to qualify on the live-fire range, said Kelly. After his first training session with the EST at Camp Curtis Guild, Houldcroft said he agreed that the comfortable, accurate trainer provided a good re-familiarization with the M-16 rifle in preparation for the live-fire range the following month with his unit.

In addition to providing a service for Soldiers currently serving in the National Guard, the EST also allows civilians a chance to hold and fire a real weapon. "For ROTC and Jr. ROTC members, the EST really changes their view and makes them more comfortable about joining the Massachusetts National Guard," said Kelly.

"It is clear that when a Soldier leaves, they are better prepared as individuals and as a collective unit in their marksmanship and teamwork," said Maj. John Pape, Operations and Facilities Manager at Camp Curtis Guild. The system came online in 2002 and trains about 3,600 Soldiers annually, operating multiple weekends per month to fit the needs of the National Guard, said Pape.

MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!

By Air Force Col. Sandra Warde and Air Force Maj. Don Chapin, Massachusetts Air National Guard

OTIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – Saturday, March 21, was a new dawn for the Massachusetts Air National Guard and especially for 46 Air National Guard Student Flight Airmen as they embarked on the first Enhanced Student Flight Training Program here. The rigorous two-day program is designed to prepare our Airmen for successful completion of Air Force Basic Military Training.

Student Flight Members endure physical training during a rigorous two-day program designed to prepare Airmen for Air Force Basic Military Training. U.S. Air Force photo: Col. Sandra Warde

The Student Flight Members from every unit across the Massachusetts Air National Guard were exposed to a number of mental and physical challenges in a structured training environment to help them assess their individual level of preparation for basic training. If they aren't as prepared as they need to be, we want them to know it. The objectives of the program are actually quite simple. In addition to creating a controlled level of stress and assessing their weight and level of physical conditioning, the training is organized to help each individual understand and experience the benefits of teamwork and to develop increased self-confidence. The concepts of personal accountability and responsibility are continually reinforced, as are following instructions, meeting and exceeding standards, and pushing themselves to excel.

Tech. Sgt. Simeone, a U.S. Air Force Reserve member and former active duty training instructor, along with approximately 15 volunteers from the Massachusetts Air National Guard Headquarters, 104th Fighter Wing and 102nd Intelligence Wing, provided some "just in time" training. Upon arriving at the 253rd Combat Communications headquarters building, the students began processing with a weigh-in and shakedown inspection. Billeting keys and room assignments were issued, along with the first meals-ready-to-eat of their military careers, as the individuals began their transition to one team. In-processing was followed by classroom instruction on reporting statements, wear of the uniform, customs and courtesies, and a very helpful overview of basic training by Training Instructor Simeone.

Next came a couple of uniform changes, the Air Force Fitness Assessment, and a dinner meal with the Army National Guard. The day culminated in a team-building exercise, meeting their Army National Guard counterparts and joint training on Suicide Prevention and Sexual Assault Awareness with the Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Battalion.

By the looks on their faces, some might have wondered what they had got themselves into as Simeone provided a realistic portrayal of a typical training instructor. When asked how this training benefited them, the students remarked that this training gave them a real perspective as to what basic training might really be like.

"The best thing I could have done over the weekend. A real worthwhile experience!" remarked one student.

The Enhanced Student Flight Training Program was designed to prepare our incoming Airmen for success at basic training and beyond. In the near future, the Air National Guard students will incorporate more non-service-specific training with the Army National Guard as well as some Army combat skills training. Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Sellars, the Massachusetts Army National Guard land component commander, is committed to helping prepare our Airmen to be successful Expeditionary Airmen. The Enhanced Student Flight Training Program is scheduled again July 17-19, 2009. ✯

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"BARKING DOGS" Unleashed on Iraq

By Sgt. Jerome Bishop, 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

WEST NEWTON, Mass. – A roar of applause erupted from the family and friends of the "Barking Dogs" of the 101st Finance Detachment as they entered the National Guard armory March 22 to begin a pre-deployment send-off ceremony.

The Soldiers of the 101st Finance Detachment, 151st Regional Support Group, Massachusetts National Guard, were activated for federal service in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While the unit won't actually board the buses until March 30, the ceremony gave the Soldiers one last opportunity to socialize with families and friends before departing on their deployment.

"This signifies us going out the door as opposed to just waiting for the day and just getting on the plane," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Porazinski, a Salem native who serves as the detachment sergeant for the 101st Finance Detachment. "It's a nice gesture for everyone to be here and recognize us before we leave."

While deployed, the 101st will be in charge of providing financial support to the Soldiers based at the Camp Victory Complex in Baghdad, a task they've been training for since January 2008.

"We'll be doing disbursements of funds, contracting and working out pay problems," Porazinski said. "We've been in contact with the unit we're replacing, and it doesn't sound that bad."

The ceremony gave others a chance to see the unit together prior to their departure, as well as provide an opportunity to recognize a few Soldiers with awards and promotions.

"The ceremony was good, well spoken, to the point, and it wrapped up in just under an hour," said Cpl. Theodore Giannino, a Somerville, Mass., native and stay-at-home dad who serves as a cashier with the 101st. Giannino was kept company afterward by his parents, siblings, girlfriend and son.

During the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Sellars, land component commander for the Massachusetts National Guard; Col. Nancy A. Souza, commander of the 151st Regional Support Group; and other representatives of the local and state governments, gave encouraging and supportive remarks to the Soldiers and their families as a testament to their abilities and to wish them a quick and safe return.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Doherty, of the 101st Finance Detachment, and his wife are interviewed by CBS 4 reporter Sera Congi during the 101st's Mobilization Ceremony. The 101st will be deploying this year in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Steven Eaton

"It's a good day, good for the families, too," said Porazinski. "It's an emotional day, but I'm happy we did it."

Soldiers of the 101st have previously deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. They are ramping up for their current deployment with three months of mobilization training at Fort McCoy, Wis., and are scheduled to return home in one year. ✭

Army Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Carter presents Army Sgt. Gerald F. Tehan with the Purple Heart and Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor, March 20, 2009, in Milford, Mass. Tehan received the awards for his actions while under enemy attack in Bala Morghab, Afghanistan, Sept. 3, 2008.
U.S. Army photo: Maj. James Sahady

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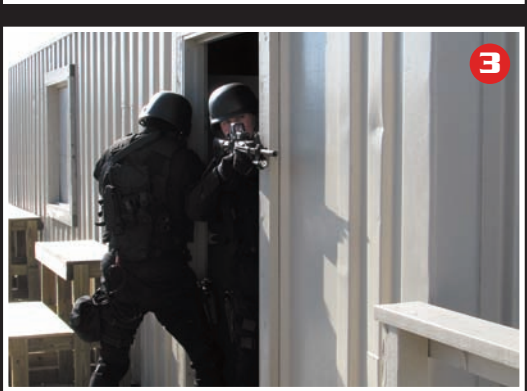

U.S. Army photos: Sgt. James C. Lally

1 – A member of the Old Colony Regional Special Operations Group restrains an unknown person during a building search at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations in Urban Terrain training site on Camp Edwards, Mass., Jan. 29, 2009. The group, made up of law enforcement officers from eight agencies, is staffed with medics, canine teams and crisis negotiators.

2 – Members of the Old Colony Regional Special Operations Group prepare to search and clear a building at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations in Urban Terrain training site on Camp Edwards, Mass., Jan. 29, 2009. The group serves high-risk warrants in 18 Massachusetts communities.

3 – Members of the Old Colony Regional Special Operations Group provide rear security while other members of the group search and clear a building at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations in Urban Terrain training site on Camp Edwards, Mass., Jan. 29, 2009. The team has armed medics in case the need arises to stabilize an injured person before a scene can be declared safe for emergency medical technicians.

4 – Members of the Old Colony Regional Special Operations Group prepare to search and clear a building at the Maj. Jeffrey R. Calero Military Operations in Urban Terrain training site on Camp Edwards, Mass., Jan. 29, 2009. The group trained at the MOUT training site to practice team movement techniques and room clearing procedures.

ARMY Guardsman RECEIVES COAST GUARD Commendation

By Army Sgt. James Lally
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

MILFORD, Mass. – A Massachusetts National Guard Soldier was awarded the United States Coast Guard Commandant's Letter of Commendation Bar at Joint Force Headquarters-Massachusetts in Milford, Mass., Feb. 12, 2009.

Army Officer Candidate Danielle M. Sullivan, 101st Regional Training Institute, Massachusetts Army National Guard, received the award from Mark Galluzo, chief of intelligence for District One, United States Coast Guard.

Sullivan was recognized for her work as a National Guard analyst providing support to the USCG from March to December 2008. Sullivan was credited with enhancing the Coast Guard's understanding of port security trends along New England's maritime border by officially documenting worldwide incidents within the merchant marine industry.

Army Officer Candidate Danielle M. Sullivan, 101st Regional Training Institute, Massachusetts Army National Guard, receives the United States Coast Guard Commandant's Letter of Commendation Bar from Mark Galluzo, chief of intelligence for District One, United States Coast Guard, at the Massachusetts National Guard Headquarters in Milford, Mass., Feb. 12, 2009. Sullivan, who provided analyst support to the USCG from March to December 2008, is credited with enhancing the Coast Guard's understanding of port security trends along New England's maritime border by officially documenting worldwide incidents within the merchant marine industry.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James C. Lally

Working with the USCG was "An adjustment at first, getting used to the nuances of a different branch, but getting to see how they operate was a great experience. For me, learning how the Coast Guard conducts business while sharing the Army way of doing things was an educational experience that benefited both services," said Sullivan.

National Guard analysts work with agencies such as the USCG and U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement to help protect the nation's borders. They are trained to be force multipliers, enhancing the investigative abilities of the agents on the street. Guardsmen assigned to work as analysts receive specialized training tailored to the agencies' needs. Sullivan has completed a criminal analyst course and received training on how to use law enforcement databases.

Sullivan has been able to apply the experience she gained while serving abroad in support of the Global War on Terror to her duties as an analyst.

"Deploying to Iraq taught me to evaluate situations in their entirety before coming to conclusions. I have always enjoyed learning and gathering new information, which is what being an analyst is all about. I know that I am helping to support our national security mission," said Sullivan.

Sullivan, who has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Endicott College, is attending Army Officer Candidate School and expects to receive a commission later this year.

Sullivan said, "OCS has made me a better Soldier and taught me to strive for excellence. I want to do the best job I possibly can, and that shows in my work." ✯

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Soldiers' Newest GI Bill Exceeds Tuition Assistance, Benefits Dependents

By Rob McIlvaine, FMWRC Public Affairs

Though the road was long and hard, the efforts and advocacy of the Army Family Action Plan have resulted in a major victory for Soldiers and Families.

The creation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill was driven by AFAP Issues #497, #385 and #525. It becomes a reality Aug. 1, 2009, and will offer all Soldiers with six years of service the opportunity to transfer unused Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents.

With this new bill, what started as an enlistment incentive has grown to become a retention tool in our all-volunteer Army. The ability to provide for the Family by transferring benefits to spouses and children becomes a powerful retention incentive. Benefits must be transferred before separating from the military. Veterans are not eligible to transfer unused benefits.

Veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001, could receive full tuition and fees, a new monthly living stipend, and a $1,000-a-year books and supplies stipend. The bill also gives Reserve and Guard members who have been activated for more than 90 days since 9/11 access to the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits, paid on a pro-rated basis, depending on length of qualifying active duty service.

Select Soldiers were offered the opportunity to transfer Montgomery GI Bill benefits as part of a pilot program which the AFAP committee was instrumental in developing. Participation in the pilot program was limited to Soldiers with critical skills, and required those who participated to accept a reduced reenlistment bonus.

The AFAP General Officer Steering Committee aggressively advocated for elimination of rules that prevented all Soldiers from participating in this valuable program. The legislation creating the Post 9/11 GI Bill, supported by the AFAP GOSC, rectified this limitation by offering all Soldiers with six years of service the opportunity to transfer unused Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.

This bill (Chapter 33) boasts the most comprehensive education benefits package since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.

Officially known as the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008" by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, the bill was signed by President Bush on June 30, 2008. It will be published as Army policy by the end of April 2009, and will become effective Aug. 1, 2009.

Generally, to be eligible to transfer benefits, Soldiers must have at least six years in the Army, active and/or Selected Reserve service, and agree to serve four more years on active duty or in the Selected Reserves.

The Department of the Army is reviewing transferability policy options for Soldiers who will have 20 or more years of service by Aug. 1, 2009, and those with 10 or more years of service who are unable to commit to four additional years.

If a service member is already enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill and meets the criteria for the Post 9/11 GI Bill, he or she has the option to convert the remaining MGIB benefits to the new program.

AFAP was created in 1980 through focus groups but was fully developed with the first official AFAP Conference held in July 1983. The mission of AFAP is to help Army leaders address the needs and concerns of the total Army Family. The program enlists representatives from around the world to identify and prioritize issues that will improve the standard of living in the Army.

This feedback to leaders results in policy changes that become tangible end-products at garrisons across the Army. AFAP beneficiaries include Soldiers (all components), retirees, Department of the Army civilian employees and all their Family members.

"We recognize what it takes to be an Army Family, and that our Soldiers draw great strength from their Families," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. at the 2008 AFAP Conference. "The welfare of Army Families is increasingly important to all of us," he said, adding that the Army was committed to building a partnership with Families as embodied in the Army Family Covenant.

Six hundred and fifty-one issues have been identified through AFAP in the past 25 years. AFAP has driven 110 legislative changes, 155 Army policy and regulatory changes, and 177 improved programs and services. It is also notable that 61 percent of all active AFAP issues impact all the Services. ✯

To view facts currently posted about the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, please visit the following:

Main VA Post 9/11 GI Bill site:

http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/benefits.htm#CH33

FAQs:

https://www.gibill2.va.gov/vba/vba.cfg/php.exe/enduser/std_alp.php?

212th Engineering Installation Squadron Lays Conduit

*Members of the Mass. Air National Guard's 212th Engineering and Installation Squadron: Master Sgt. Dan Robertson, Staff Sgt. Keith McInnes, Staff Sgt. Calvin Melvin, Senior Airman Christopher Finneran, Airman 1st Class Jonathan Davies, Airman 1st Class Jack Cardinal, Airman 1st Class Andrew Garozzo and Airman 1st Class Mather Carroll. A*ir Force photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert Sabonis

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Fredette, 104th Communications Flight

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays the 212th Engineering Installation Squadron from the swift completion of their appointed duties. Just like our neighborhood postal carriers, the men and women of the 212th EIS could easily use the same creed.

In January, on very short notice and with a tight schedule, Chief Master Sgt. Pete Rauktis and his crew from the 212th came to Barnes to upgrade conduit infrastructure to enable the future installation of fiber optic cables. They planned a new path for the conduit to be trenched from Falcon Drive through the snow-packed woods into our existing duct system. Their installation team, led by Master Sgt. Dan Robertson, worked quickly and efficiently through horrible weather conditions to install the duct run, ahead of time and right on budget. Nothing the weather brought kept the team from getting the job at hand done.

This project resulted in a major upgrade to our infrastructure, which in the short term will allow a four-fold increase in the data rate of the long-haul circuit that connects the Barnes local area network to the Air National Guard Internet network enclave. In the long term, the 212th has helped the base with capability for future expansion. ✯

Col. John Hammond, Chief of Staff, Massachusetts National Guard, explains the Guard's community involvement initiative during a training session at Massachusetts National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Milford, Mass., Feb. 26, 2009. U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

Thomas W. Desmond, state diversity initiatives coordinator, Massachusetts National Guard, was awarded the 2008 Excellence in Diversity Army Individual Award for notable achievement March 26, 2009, during the National Guard Diversity Conference in St. Louis, Mo. Desmond also received a letter of congratulations for receiving the award from Gen. Craig McKinley, Chief, National Guard Bureau.
U.S. Army photo: Sgt. James Lally

Otis Unit Receives Red Cross Award

By Evan C. Lagasse, 102nd Intelligence Wing Public Affairs

OTIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – The 267th Combat Communications Squadron received the 2008 Cape Cod and Islands Red Cross Hero Award in the category of "Military/Community Service" at the 7th Annual Heroes Breakfast, March 6, in Hyannis, Mass.

"The 267th CBCS ... has played an instrumental role supporting the United States Air Force and their Air Expeditionary Force rotations from September 2007 through January 2008. Twenty-five Airmen assigned to the 267th CBCS deployed to Balad and Kirkuk Air Bases, Iraq. They led and augmented teams of deployed combat communicators providing mission critical command and control communications and warfighting support, to not only the Air Force but also the Joint and Coalition Teams determined to win today's' fight in the Global War on Terrorism," said Maj. Christopher Willander, 267th Combat Communications Squadron detachment commander.

A few of the endeavors included in their official award nomination letter for the 267 CBCS were providing a rapid response capability to the Cape and Islands communities and others with a reliable interoperable communications system to support domestic and homeland security emergencies. In 2008, Airmen of the 267 CBCS deployed personnel in support of the Independence Day celebration in Boston, the Boston Marathon and the Falmouth Road Race. Critical communication capabilities provided to civil support personnel greatly enhanced public safety through a Joint Incident Site Communications Capability System. The unit's JISCC included personnel, power generators, portable shelters, heating and air conditioners, portable laptop computers, telephones and Land Mobile Radios which delivered interoperable and seamless communications aiding efforts to various first responders and civil agencies. These communications capabilities allowed first responders and civilian agencies to have instant access to critical information, providing services to include Internet, video, teleconference, telephone and portable radio communications.

As 2008 came to a close, the 267 CBCS already had a lengthy list of accomplishments; however, their services were called on once again after a devastating ice storm wreaked havoc on various locations throughout New England, leaving tens of thousands of homes and businesses without power while the winter holidays quickly approached. True to form, the Airmen of the 267th CBCS answered the call, helping to establish a Massachusetts Air National Guard communications command response center to coordinate mutual aid in helping to restore electrical power to more than 60,000 Massachusetts residents. The unit's actions gained nation-wide attention in being able to deploy these new communications technologies in support of real time emergency events.

A bust of Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Edwards is among the treasured items on display in Worcester's MANG Military Museum & Archives in a room dedicated to the 26th Yankee Division. Edwards, who commanded the division in combat during WWI, is the namesake for the Massachusetts National Guard's training site at Camp Edwards, Mass.
U.S. Army photo: Pfc. Alfred Tripolone III

Massachusetts National Guard History Displayed in Worcester

By Army Pfc. Alfred Tripolone III, 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

WORCESTER, Mass. – From its battlements to its broad doors, from its four stories of imposing red brick to its gun ports, the Worcester Armory's resemblance to a castle is oddly fitting considering the treasures it holds within. The long and proud history of the Massachusetts National Guard is on display here at the Massachusetts National Guard Military Museum & Archives.

The museum, which opened in 1995, is overseen by retired Army Col. Leonid Kondratiuk. He was named as the Director of Historical Services for the Massachusetts National Guard in April 1999, and has worked diligently to improve the displays and reorganize the archival collections.

The museum's first floor boasts an impressive collection of original and replica weapons, uniforms and flags which span the centuries from the National Guard's inception in 1636 to the present day. The second floor is dedicated to the many wars the Soldiers and Airmen of the Massachusetts National Guard have fought in, from the Battle of Lexington and Concord to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to displaying an impressive collection of artifacts, the Museum is also home to the archival records of the Massachusetts National Guard. Families who would like to find out about an ancestor's service in the Guard can contact Kondratiuk, and within a few days, he will be able to tell the family what battles their loved one was involved in.

"We are the home of the history of the Massachusetts National Guard," said Kondratiuk. "We invite all to come and visit to get a better feel for the history."

The museum, located at 44 Salisbury St. in Worcester, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call (508) 797-0334 or visit the Web site at http://ma.ng.mil/resources/museum/. ✯

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**Military Liaison is a Massachusetts National Guard NCO scheduled for deployment in 2010. ENC also staffs a veteran's benefit specialist to expedite financial benefit processing.*

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